Coming to the throne in B.C. 140, at the age of sixteen, he ruled the Empire until B.C. 87, or for over fifty years. His was by far the longest reign of the dynasty, and one of the most famous in the history of China. He inherited a realm which had recovered from the exhaustion that preceded and followed the Ch'in and which was now prosperous and ready for expansion and fresh activity. The half-century is noted both for extensive foreign conquests and for marked internal developments in organization and culture.

The territorial expansion during the reign of Wu Ti was to the northwest, the northeast, and the south, and extended the boundaries and the influence of China farther than at any previous time,

In the Northwest, the chief enemies of the Chinese were the Hsiung Nu. As we have seen, this semi-nomadic people had been held at bay by Shih Huang Ti. They had taken advantage of the internal turmoil in China at the close of the Ch'in once more to become aggressive. Welded into a confederation by an able leader, they had become a formidable foe. During the earlier years of the Han they had been a fairly constant menace and had repeatedly raided Chinese territory. Wu Ti made their subjugation one of his major objectives. In doing so he established contacts with Central Asia which brought the Chinese into touch with the great civilizations to the West—with interesting consequences.

Wu Ti sought to conquer the Hsiung Nu partly by direct military campaigns, partly by establishing military colonies in their territory, and partly by diplomacy. Wu Tfs generals carried on the warfare for years and with much success. The Chinese frontier was pushed out to include most of what is

now Kansu, probably beyond where it had been in Shih Huang Ti's time, and colonies, garrisons, and a westward extension of the Great Wall- first to the Jade Gate (Yii Men) and later still farther west- ward—helped to give the victories permanence. Wu Ti did not entirely break the power of the Hsiung Nu, but he reduced it greatly.

In the days of their might, the Hsiung Nu had defeated some neighbors of theirs, the Yiieh Chih,[2] or Tochari, who were then living in what is now, roughly, Western Kansu. The Yiieh Chih.

[2] Also romanized Yiieh Shih.